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Ministry of Education

HEALTHY, SAFE SCHOOLS FOCUS OF NEW SCHOOL YEAR

VICTORIA – A provincewide expansion of StrongStart BC early learning centres highlights several changes in education for the upcoming school year, Education Minister Shirley Bond announced today.

"We know that nearly one out of four kindergarten students is not developmentally ready to start school," Bond said. "These early learning centres are part of our plan to improve pre-literacy skills so that B.C. children have the best possible start in school and in life."

From legislative changes to expanded programs and courses, here is what's new in education for 2007/08:

- StrongStart BC expansion – up to 80 StrongStart BC early learning centres will be open by the end of 2007, helping to ensure pre-school children are ready to learn when they reach kindergarten.

- Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence – nominations open in September for this new award, created to recognize outstanding B.C. teachers who have made exceptional contributions to benefit their school community and improve student achievement.

- Course Updates:
  - A new English 12 First Peoples course will be piloted in some 20 schools across the Province. The course focuses on the experiences, values, beliefs of First Peoples as evidenced in various forms of text – including oral story, speech, poetry, dramatic work, dance, song, film, and prose (non-fiction and fiction).
  - A major revision to English Language Arts K-7, which includes a strong focus on literacy.

- Tobacco Ban – a provincewide tobacco ban on both public and independent school property to create healthier, safer school environment for students.

- Boards of Education – school boards are now called "boards of education," renamed to reflect a broader mandate that includes early learning and literacy.

- Codes of Conduct – legislative changes requiring all boards of education to establish codes of conduct for students in their districts, to help prevent bullying and harassment. The codes of conduct must meet the provincial standards set out in the Safe Schools Strategy introduced in March 2004.

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- Teacher Discipline Registry – legislation to protect B.C. students and provide the public with information about educators who have been disciplined by the B.C. College of Teachers.

- Superintendents of Achievement – four new positions created to help boards reach their performance goals, and support districts to improve student achievement, early learning and literacy programs and develop leadership at the district level.

"These changes will help ensure students of all ages feel safe and have the support and resources they need to achieve their best," said Bond. The province is well on its way to becoming the healthiest, best-educated, and most-literate jurisdiction on the continent because of the incredible schools, students, staff and teachers we have in B.C."

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